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2017 Year in Review

Commander's Corner

By Marvin L. Jones
Commanding Officer, NSA Bethesda

NSAB Family – It’s hard to fathom just how quickly this year has come and gone. As we prepare to wrap up 2017, the year can be summarized in a few words: We faced significant challenges, and we made significant progress. All of this was accomplished through your dedicated efforts, your continued commitment, and the special things that you do to enable and help meet the various missions that are performed on this installation every day. THANK YOU to all for your hard work over the last 12 months.

While there is still much work to do and there may be further challenges ahead, we end 2017 stronger and better able to meet the needs of those who come here to heal, pursue educational and research endeavors, serve patients and patrons, and support the defense of our great nation. Throughout the year, we sought ways to streamline and simplify our operational and business processes, while maximizing the support we provided to our mission partners and tenant commands. Today, our installation team is stronger and better prepared to build deeper relationships and serve our customers and clients, inside the fence line and beyond. Every individual who works here should take great pride in being part of this special family that supports the great work accomplished on this installation each day. I’m so proud that all of us — military, civilians, contractors and volunteers – are able to do that together.



Capt. Marvin L. Jones
NSAB Commanding Officer

Heading into the holidays, I ask that you please keep safety in mind. Pay attention to the road, those Christmas lights, the stovetop, the fireplace, and all of the other small but significant hazards that can quickly turn a good holiday vacation into a tragic one. The role you play here is important, and practicing solid self-care helps

reinforce our opportunities and availability to continue working together as a team.

I appreciate all of your great work this year. It is because of you that I have such great confidence in our future. Please enjoy this holiday season and let’s get right back to continued mission success in 2018.

Bethesda Notebook

Command Assessment Team
Walter Reed Bethesda’s Command Assessments Team is seeking members to assist in helping the command promote a positive command morale, encourage an environment for growth within the organization, assist in endorsing equal opportunity, conduct focus groups, and formulate plans of actions and milestones for enhancing the Command Managed Equal Opportunity program, and advertise and conduct the Defense Equal Opportunity Command Survey. For more information, contact Navy Lt. Cmdr. Melissa Burke at Melissa.k.burke2.mil@mail.mil.

Excavation Blasting
Excavation blasting for the MD 355 Crossing project, managed by Montgomery County, will take place for the next several months. During that period, three to five times per week, there will be a single controlled explosive blast. Alarm horns will sound five minutes before the blast. It is anticipated that a minimal vibration will be felt, and alarm horns will be heard only by people in the immediate vicinity. People with questions can email dha.bethesda.wrnmcc.list.communications-team@mail.mil, or call 301-400-1934.

Fleet, Family Support Center
The Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) on Naval Support Activity Bethesda offers programs intended to assist service members and their families with military life. FFSC’s workshops and seminars include job search strategies for military spouses, federal resume writing, time management, credit management, consumer financial awareness, interview skills, pre-deployment briefings, return and reunion briefings, and more. For more information, call 301-319-4087, or visit FFSC in Building 11, first floor.

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NSAB Sailors Participate in 58th Presidential Inauguration

By MC2 Hank Gettys
NSAB Public Affairs

Editor's Note: The story originally ran Feb. 2.

Participating in a presidential inauguration is much more than showing up, standing at attention and rendering a few salutes. It's a time-honored military tradition in which few get to take part.

"It's a distinguished honor to be asked to be a part of this," said Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Joshua Reynolds, NSAB security department training and exercise coordinator. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so just being a part of it is a unique honor itself."

The tradition goes all the way back to 1789, when the Army, the militia, and Revolutionary War veterans escorted President-elect George Washington into Federal Hall in New York City, said Maj. Gen. Bradley A. Becker, commander of the Joint Task Force — National Capital Region (NCR).

"This peaceful transfer of power is so important for this country," said Becker. "[My troops] have the honor of representing the more than two million men and women in all the services, many of whom are deployed," Becker said.



U.S. NAVY PHOTO BY SENIOR CHIEF MUSICIAN STEPHEN HASSAY

The U.S. Army Field Band marches down Pennsylvania Avenue during the 58th Presidential Inaugural Parade in Washington, D.C. The Parade was held to celebrate the inauguration of the 45th President of the United States, President Donald Trump.

Having a role in such a significant and historical event is one of the unique opportunities that comes with serving at NSAB, part of the Naval District Washington (NDW) in the NCR.

"It's really neat being here at NSAB and it's not just the inauguration,"

said Religious Programs Specialist Seaman Apprentice Heath Steffey, a part of the religious programs staff at NSAB. "I get to take visits to the Pentagon and other things of that nature in the area. Being here is a good geographical location for any service member to be able to take advantage

of unique opportunities like this."

Being a part of the cordon is also not just a one-day commitment, it involved multiple uniform inspections and giving up part of a holiday weekend for a full-day dress rehearsal.

"We did a few uniform inspections to make sure everything was squared away and looking up to Navy standards," said Reynolds. "Especially while we are out there, we are standing in front of thousands of people and news crews, so it is definitely important to look our best."

"We also did a dry run on [Jan. 15] to make sure everything was good to go and to get the procedures down for Friday."

The day of the inauguration itself is a grind, meeting at 1:30 a.m. and not finishing with the ceremony until 6 p.m. Through it all, however, participating in and witnessing a prominent moment in history outweighs the long hours and preparation, according to Steffey.

"I think that knowing we are doing something so important helps get us through such a long day and the pride that you are a part of something bigger than yourself," said Steffey. "It may be a long day and you may be stressed out and tired, but what you are doing and what it represents outweighs the fatigue you may feel that day."

Beyond The Walls: Walter Reed Bethesda Supports National Special Security Events

By Megan Garcia
WRNMMC Public Affairs

Editor's Note: The story originally ran April 6.

In conjunction with the Fort Belvoir Community Hospital, Walter Reed Bethesda provides medical support, in the form of advanced trauma life support teams or advanced cardiac life support teams, to national special security events throughout the National Capital Region.

These events include presidential inaugurations and inaugural events, State of the Union addresses, Memorial Day events at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, state funerals and any other events that have a large government presence with expected high-risk security concerns.

One National Special Security Events team can consist of between five to 12 people, which entail one to two providers, one to two registered nurses, a senior enlisted advisor and medical specialists or corpsman.

Most recently, approximately five teams from WRB supported the 2017 Presidential Inauguration with the main focus of supporting the military personnel involved with medical care should any emergencies arise.

"It went pretty smoothly," said Army Lt. Col. (Dr.) David Eigner, a pediatric doctor and the NSSE medical director of WRB. "There was a lot of coordination with other organizations because the inauguration is basically run by the Secret Service and The Department of Homeland



COURTESY PHOTO

Service members from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and employees from Department of Health and Human Services in Rockville take a photo before starting their medical support for the 2017 Presidential Inauguration in Washington, D.C., Jan. 20.

Security. The medical care was pretty simple. It's just coordinating and learning how you fit into a multi-agency picture."

Eigner said there were eight tents along the inauguration route and each team worked out of the various tents.

He added overall he was proud of the way everyone adapted and overcame the various changes that came with such a large, historic event.

"Walter Reed does a lot of great things to support our government's function, and we're proud to do that, and we're proud to do this on top of everything else we do. It's one of the things that makes us different," Eigner said.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Brandy Navarajo, the senior enlisted leader for medical nursing services for the department of nursing and a team leader for the NSSE, has participated in seven national special security events, along with the 2017 presidential inauguration.

"To be in the military, you're serving your country regardless, but to be out there doing events, to be able to say you are a part of history, I feel like I'm really giving back," Navarajo said.

Navarajo added everyone who's involved in these types of events are always enthusiastic and excited to provide support.

Behind the scenes to make sure everything runs smoothly, Navy Lt. Thomas Vaughn, the department chief for operations management, also assist with NSSE operational and administrative functions.

Vaughn, who maintains the team roster, helps to determine the types of teams and the number of teams to send out to the different events. He also works with the emergency management department, the information technology department and logistics to ensure the teams have everything they need such as medical aid kits, communications devices and vehicles.

Although he hasn't participated in any events himself, he ensures he attends all of the rehearsals in order to help prepare the teams, and like Navarajo and Eigner, Vaughn agrees it's a special part of Walter Reed Bethesda's mission.

"I think it's just great," Vaughn said. "It's history. It's just an amazing thing to be a part of," he added.

Looking Back:



PHOTO BY MC2 HANK GETTYS

Representatives from Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB), Naval Facilities Engineering Command Washington and Walsh Construction cut a ribbon to mark the completion of new cooling towers at NSAB.



PHOTO BY MCI CHRISTOPHER KRUCKE

Marine Gunnery Sgt. Archie, a therapy dog at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, was read his retirement citation March 7 during a ceremony in the rotunda of the historic Tower on Naval Support Activity Bethesda.



PHOTO BY MC3 WILLIAM PHILLIPS

A player attempts to dunk during a game against Ft. Meade Jan. 14 at Naval Support Activity Bethesda. The Warriors won the 13th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. basketball tournament.



PHOTO BY SHARON HOLLAND

A group of about 23 middle school-aged military children had a chance to learn inspiring and exciting lessons, using virtual and augmented reality, during a two-day workshop this month at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

January to June



PHOTO BY MC3 WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) hosted the 2017 Eggstravaganza for children and family at the MWR Sports Complex on Naval Support Activity Bethesda April 8. The Eggstravaganza included food, games, entertainment and an Easter egg hunt.



PHOTO BY MC2 WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Sailors, civilians and their families from Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) gathered June 17 to come together as an organization and build camaraderie. The event was NSAB's first command picnic.



PHOTO BY KALILA FLEMING

Members of Walter Reed Bethesda's Mother Infant Care Center show off a poster designed to inform beneficiaries and staff about the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. The MICC team led efforts for the medical center achieving its Baby-Friendly Birth Facility designation in 2017.



PHOTO BY MC2 WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) Morale, Welfare and Recreation held a "Color Me 5K" race June 10 around NSAB. Runners were doused with colored powder along the course and could also run an obstacle course before and after the race.

Styx and Eddie Money Perform at NSAB

Story and Photos by MC3 William Phillips
NSAB Public Affairs

Editor's Note: The story originally ran May 18.

The bands Styx and Eddie Money performed at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Sports Complex May 13.

"It's an honor to perform at a military base," said Styx pianist and singer Lawrence Gowen. "Over the course of the years we do get asked to do things for services and we always enjoy playing for them. There is always a great audience... Through these kinds of shows, we've done some great behind the scenes tours and gotten a peek of what goes into the life that service members live. That's really educational for us and we really enjoy it."

According to Eddie, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center is a very important place for service members.

"Walter Reed Hospital is an amazing place," said Money. "This is where they put people back together again. It's a real honor to do something for my country and the people serving it. It is good to give something back, the reason we sleep [well] at night is because of [service members]."

Some people are not able to keep their music fresh, but Gowen said Styx manages to keep their music fresh by finding new meaning for songs each time they play them.

"It's funny; keeping songs that you play over and over is really how you approach it," said Gowen. "If you feel like you really know this song and you're not connected to it on a daily basis and you're just playing it, it is going to come out as a very flat performance. The great thing about playing in Styx, that's never been our attitude. Every time we get to play those songs, it's another chance to discover some nuance of that piece. It fits where our lives are today. In that moment that song is reborn."

Eddie Money said that playing the same songs is a gift.

"It was a gift from god that you wrote these songs and when people hear it lights them up and it brings back



The bands Styx and Eddie Money played a concert May 13 at the MWR Sports Complex. More than 1,000 service members, DoD civilians and their families attended the event. The entertainers were the first major bands to perform an evening concert at Naval Support Activity Bethesda since it was established in 2011.

memories from a certain time of their life," said Money. "...I talk to all these people that grew up with my music in the 70s and 80s, and they say it brings them back to a certain time in their lives."

According to Gowen, every show is important to Styx.

"There has never been a show that is not important



to us," said Gowen. "Part of the reason the band has weathered nearly five decades now is that every show is important. There is a degree of seriousness, which may be hard to believe when you see how much fun the show is."

Eddie said shows like this are a chance for him to give back to the service members on base.

Members of both bands spoke of their military ties.

"I was originally from Britain, and my dad was in the Royal Navy during the Second World War; he has lots of stories from that," said Gowen.

"My dad was in the Navy and when the opportunity to do something for our military comes, it is really important to me to give back," said Eddie. "I've got friends and family members in the service so this concert was a no brainer for me."

Even though this wasn't the first show either band had done on a military base, both Gowen and Money said shows on military bases are always great.

This concert was the first to showcase major bands at NSA Bethesda.

"It's a real honor to be the first major band to play on base," said Money. "I wouldn't say it's something I feel like I deserve, but it's something very special to me. To see how hard [service members] work serving our country is amazing. I know you're not doing it for the money, so it's the least I could do to give back."

"It's great that you're starting at the top; I'll say that with absolutely false modesty," said Gowen. "It's great to be the first band to do that. We have a lot of requirements for us to play a show, and so far the preparation at any military base has been great."

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NSAB Conducts Active Shooter Exercise

By MC2 William Phillips
NSAB Public Affairs

Editor's Note: The story originally ran Aug. 31.

Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) conducted an active shooter exercise Aug. 23. aboard NSAB.

"We conducted the event to exercise our antiterrorism plan and keep our security forces in the readiest state possible," said NSAB Antiterrorism Officer Hans Semple.

The exercise is designed to train Naval Security Forces (NSF) personnel in dealing with an active shooter on base, and identify areas the security department can work on.

"Training evolutions are how we work on our skills, learn to work as a unit and develop a plan to overcome our shortfalls," Master-at-Arms 1st Class Zane Kentner, antiterrorism training team member.

The base headquarters served as the setting for the drill because of its central location on the base and

the tough environment law enforcement would face in an actual incident.

"All of the objectives were met and the personnel who participated did well," said Kentner. "They continue to grow and learn from the training exercises we hold."

While there is still room to improve, Kentner said he is satisfied with his department's performance.

To make sure NSAB is ready for different incidents, they train for multiple scenarios.

"There is always a chance that someone could attempt to attack the base," said Semple. "By making the base a harder target for them, we are lowering the probability because we have already trained for a response. If someone happens to be observing the base and sees that we are able to respond to these types of events, it does help minimize the likelihood of someone going through with the attack."

According to Semple, each exercise is designed to improve the NSF's readiness and capability to respond to real life events.



PHOTO BY MC2 WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Naval Support Activity Bethesda security department held an active shooter drill Aug. 23 as part of their regular incident response training. Active shooter scenarios test both security personnel and first response team members in a variety of locations across the installation. The exercises keep response skills up-to-date for both experienced and first time participants.

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Looking Back:



PHOTO BY ANDREW DAMSTEDT

Maryland Veterans Affairs Secretary George Owings presented a Veterans Day proclamation from Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan at Naval Support Activity Bethesda's Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.



PHOTO BY AREEBAH SHAH

VolunTeen Maristela Romero practices on "patient" in the simulation center.



PHOTO BY MC2 WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Naval Support Activity Bethesda Chaplain Lt. Cmdr. Christilene Whalen speaks during the NSAB Interfaith Center dedication Oct. 5. The Interfaith Center is a space for personnel of all religions to come practice their religion on base.



PHOTO BY MC2 WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Ashley Lindstrom observes the solar eclipse Aug. 21 at Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB). NSAB was inside the path that was 80 percent eclipsed.



PHOTO BY MC2 KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

Chief Hospital Corpsman Ronald Crawford, leading petty officer for Primary Care Dental at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, has his chief petty officer anchors pinned on his uniform by a little one during the Navy Medicine National Capital Region Chief Petty Officer Pinning Ceremony on Sept. 15 at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

July to December



PHOTO BY MC2 WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Personnel from Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) Public Works department and the Environmental Protection Agency cut a cake with NSAB Commanding Officer Capt. Marvin L. Jones during a cake cutting ceremony July 14.



PHOTO BY MC2 KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) Director Navy Capt. (Dr.) Mark A. Kobelja speaks to Sailors in front of the historic Tower at WRNMMC before the Sailors depart the medical center Sept. 28 for Naval Station Norfolk (NNS), Virginia and duty on USNS Comfort (T-AH 20). The Sailors from WRNMMC will be part of the hospital ship's crew providing relief care in the Caribbean to support humanitarian relief operations helping those affected by Hurricane Maria. The Comfort returned to NNS in November just in time for Thanksgiving. During the mission the ship's crew treated 1,899 patients, performed 191 surgeries, provided 76-thousand liters of oxygen and ten tons of food and water, according to NNS officials.



PHOTO BY MC2 WILLIAM PHILLIPS

The Warrior Transition Brigade-National Capital Region hosted NBA Hoops for Troops Nov. 9. The event was a wheelchair basketball game played by service members and coached by former NBA player Adrian Dantley and WBNA player Tayler Hill.



PHOTO BY SHARON HOLLAND

Fourth-year medical students and graduate nursing students from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences participated in the university's annual medical field practicum known as "Operation Bushmaster" held at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa. in October. Bushmaster tests the students' medical knowledge, leadership skills and teamwork abilities over four chaotic, stressful days of a simulated combat deployment.



WTB COURTESY PHOTO

The Warrior Transition Brigade has helped almost 5,500 Soldiers during its first 10 years. The WTB is celebrating its 10-year anniversary May 5 at the D.C. Armory.

Warrior Transition Brigade-NCR Marks 10 Years

By Andrew Damstedt
The Journal

Editor's Note: The story originally ran May 4.

During its first 10 years, the Warrior Transition Brigade-National Capital Region has helped 5,476 wounded, ill or injured Soldiers.

"The unit was [created] to assist Soldiers and their families – who were predominantly at that time ones who were wounded – to assist them in their healing and their transition either back into the Force or to become productive veterans," said WTB-NCR Commander Col. Christopher Boyle. "What we saw in 2007 in the height of our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – that although we were giving great medical care to our Soldiers – the support apparatus needed to be a little more robust."

On May 5, the WTB is hosting an event at the D.C. Armory to commemorate its first decade with invitations sent out to past alumni, employees and caregivers.

The program includes remarks by Boyle as well as WTB-NCR's first commander, Maj. Gen. Terrance McKenrick; and Lt. Gen. Gary Cheek, a former commanding general of the Warrior Transition Command.

The Warrior Transition Brigade's mission is to heal, educate and transition.

"We're preparing the Soldier and their family to return back to the force – make sure their military skills are up to par – and that they continue to develop professionally during their time of healing," Boyle said.

And if a Soldier cannot continue their military service, Boyle said the WTB connects them with programs so they can be productive in their next phase of life.

"We want to make sure that they have the skills and the attributes that are required to be a productive veteran," he said. "To make sure they have the ability to go out and do interviews and get jobs and are able to translate what they've done in the military."

So far, 617 Soldiers have completed internships while in the WTB, with 140 of them getting jobs from their internships.

In addition to employment opportunities, the WTB offers adaptive sports, wellness and art programs.

There are around 150 civilian and military employees working for the WTB including squad leaders, nurse case managers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and administrative staff.

Boyle shared an experience of the dedication the employees have for the WTB Soldiers by recounting how they stayed by the bedside of a terminally ill Soldier who didn't have family to stay with him as he was dying.

"It happened to be over Thanksgiving of 2015, and what I didn't know, what I found out after was the squad leader, the staff sergeant, his nurse case manager, his platoon sergeant, and his social worker essentially did a 24-hour vigil over Thanksgiving weekend to make sure that he didn't pass away by himself," Boyle said.

Another aspect of Boyle's job as WTB commander is meeting the family when

a Soldier is medically evacuated to the installation.

"In many cases you're going to meet a spouse, maybe mom or dad or other family members who the military has brought in to support that Soldier and your inclination is when you're going to meet a mother of a Soldier is that her thought may be 'I gave you my son or daughter and this is what you're giving back to me,'" he said. "But it's been quite the opposite. I've gone up there several times, see a Soldier in the ICU, who has a lot of instrumentation, monitors, tubes and the first thing the parents do is thank us."

The WTB helps the families of Soldiers who become part of the brigade.

"We know this isn't just about the Soldiers, in many cases we've uprooted the family who's come to support the Soldier, spouses, moms, dads, kids, they need as much support as the Soldiers," he said.

One of those caregivers was Linda Rasnake, who cared for her husband in 2006 while he was receiving treatment for a back injury at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center. After a bad experience finding a place to stay, she vowed to not let any caregiver go through the same experience. She worked to help other family members while caring for her husband and was offered a job as a family readiness support assistant when the Warrior Transition Brigade was established.

"People have recognized the roles of the caregiver side and that they're not just here hanging out, not doing anything," Rasnake said. "They play such important roles in the

recovery of our Wounded Warriors. It's unbelievable. There's scholarships out there for caregivers; there's retreats for caregivers."

Housing also improved when the WTB moved to its current location at Naval Support Activity Bethesda, she said.

"Here you have mini apartments," she said. "It's like a real life instead of hotel living."

One thing she'd like people to do is interact with the wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers when they move into their communities.

"If you notice somebody is on prosthetic legs, don't be afraid to go talk to them," she said. "Don't be afraid to ask them what happened to them. They are not going to bite; they're just like everyone else. Don't stare them down; just accept them as a part of your community."

Another employee who's been with the WTB since the start is retired Lt. Col. Patricia Stephen-Blake, a nurse case manager. She does intake interviews for Soldiers coming to the WTB.

"We usually have young Soldiers, who sometimes have very devastating illnesses, and they need all the help that they can get when it comes to medicine because they are not familiar with anything in the medical process," Stephen-Blake said.

Healthcare access for Soldiers has improved as well as being able to better identify their needs and help them transition, she said.

"We're here for the Soldiers and their families and we try to meet their medical and emotional needs," she said.

Kobelja Takes the Helm of WRNMMC

By Bernard S. Little
WRNMMC Command Communications

Editor's Note: The story originally ran July 6.

Navy Capt. (Dr.) Mark A. Kobelja assumed authority of Walter Reed National Military Medical Center during a ceremony June 30 in WRNMMC's Memorial Auditorium.

Kobelja replaces Army Col. Michael S. Heimall, who retired from the military after more than 30 years of service, serving the last 13 months as the WRNMMC director.

Navy Rear Adm. (Dr.) David A. Lane, director of the National Capital Region Medical Directorate, officiated the change of authority ceremony, stating, "This is truly an important event in the life cycle of Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, one of the most storied and recognizable institutions in the U. S. military and in American medicine.

"If you say, 'Walter Reed National Military Medical Center,' [people] naturally think of the greatness of military medicine," Lane said. He added WRNMMC is where "America's heroes, wounded warriors, come to heal." WRNMMC offers "unquestionably world leading comprehensive ballistic rehabilitative care" [within its Military Advanced Training Center], diagnosis and treatment of traumatic brain injury [in the National Intrepid Center of Excellence], the only Department of Defense medical center with an enhanced bio-containment unit and special pathogen lab for viruses like Ebola and other infectious diseases, the only DOD medical center performing solid organ transplants, and the John P. Murtha Cancer Center [the only designated cancer center of excellence in DOD], which is also spearheading the White House's Cancer Moonshot military efforts.

"[In addition], nearly 40 percent of DOD's graduate health education and over a third of its clinical research gets done [at WRNMMC]," Lane added.

"It takes a special breed of leader to lead an iconic organization like Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, [and] Col. Michael Heimall has been just that kind of special leader," Lane continued. "This is essentially his fifth command tour," the admiral added, explaining Heimall has commanded an Army dental activity, medical activity, Army hospital, Army medical center and WRNMMC.

Lane said while Heimall "will be greatly missed and is leaving big shoes to fill," Kobelja "is the right leader to fill those shoes." He added Kobelja is among that "special breed of leader" poised "to direct America's medical center [WRNMMC]. I have complete trust and confidence that he'll pick up right where Colonel Heimall left off."

Kobelja is no stranger to WRNMMC or the Naval Support Activity Bethesda campus. He completed his medical degree at the University Services University on NSAB, as well as clinical training in anesthesiology at the former National Naval Medical Center and pain medicine training at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center, predecessors of WRNMMC. He also served on the NNMC staff as an anesthesiologist, as well as department head of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, and chair of the Executive Committee of the Medical Staff and director for Surgical Services, overseeing the integration and transition of surgical staffs of WRAMC and NNMC into WRNMMC.



PHOTO BY MC2 KEVIN CUNNINGHAM

Newly installed Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Director Navy Capt. Mark Kobelja addresses the audience during the change of command ceremony June 30.

His other previous assignments included deputy commander of the Naval Medical Center San Diego, and commanding officer of Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California. Prior to coming to WRNMMC as director, Kobelja served as Fleet Surgeon for U.S. Naval Forces Europe/Africa and U.S. Sixth Fleet.

At the change of authority, Kobelja saluted "the unwavering service" of Heimall and the Heimall family. "Congratulations on a distinguished career. Well done. You have built a brilliant leadership team and your work with our external partners has set the stage for generations of success."

The new WRNMMC director said to the medical center staff, "It's an honor to work with you again in this noble endeavor. This facility is the descendant of two great institutions, and you have been faithful to the legacies of selfless service, excellence, and compassionate care to our nation's heroes and their families, [and] champions of expert research and education that has transformed medical and surgical care throughout the world, all while many of you have gone into harm's way alongside our brothers and sisters in arms. You are leading the way for a grateful nation. Our patients and their families need us, and we have the watch."

Guest speaker for Heimall's retirement, Dr. Richard W. Thomas, USU president, also commended the service of the Heimall family, stating the colonel "is another link in a family that has dedicated themselves to service to our nation

and their communities....Over 30 years of service, [Heimall] has dedicated himself to ensuring our service members and their families are taken care of every day and receive world-class care."

Heimall explained one of the things that has made his career rewarding are his "teammates — battle buddies, shipmates and wingmen, pulling each other along, pushing to reach a goal that at times you feel there is just no way you're ever going to get to, but you do.

"The Army and Navy have blessed me with incredible teams to help me do my mission," Heimall added. He called WRNMMC "a very, very special place with a great mission — the opportunity to care for America's most severely injured service members and their families."

The colonel said the men and women who serve in uniform, along with their families, "have written a blank check to the United States of America with their lives. When they go into harm's way, they deserve to know that there is a health-care system behind them that is going to spare no expense or sacrifice to bring them home safe and return them to their families as productive Americans.

"Our patients and our staff are really the best America has to offer. They deserve the absolute best medical system we can give them. We need to stop talking about protecting our service-specific equities, resources and control. We need to spend our time talking about how we are going to best care for America's sons and daughters," Heimall added.

Naval Dosimetry Opens New Temporary Location

By Andrew Damstedt
The Journal

Editor's Note: The story originally ran Feb. 23.

A new temporary building housing the Naval Dosimetry Center was praised at a ribbon cutting ceremony Feb. 16.

Building 84T will be the center's home until its new space in the upcoming Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) remodel is completed.

According to Lt. j.g. Kristina Jones, the ribbon cutting was ceremonial. Celebrating the opening recognized the completion of the physical move which took place mid-January.

The new building is host to 40 people who work at the center and provide centralized dosimetry services for the entire U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

The center provides



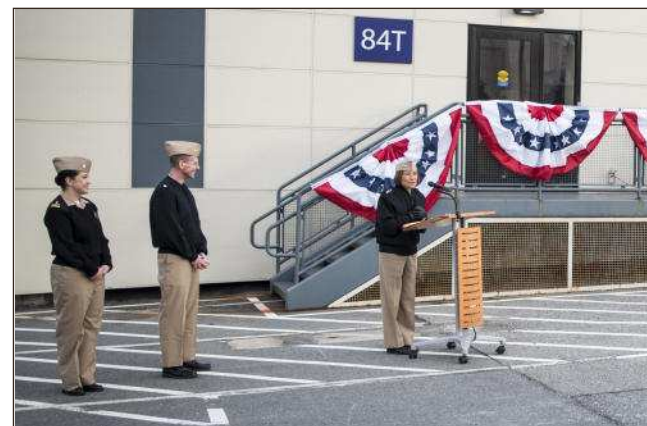
Vice Adm. Raquel Bono (center left), Director, Defense Health Agency, cuts the ribbon for the Naval Dosimetry Center (NDC) at Naval Support Activity Bethesda with Cmdr. Thad Sharp, Officer-in-Charge at NDC, and Rear Adm. Terry Moulton, Deputy Surgeon General of the Navy.

whole-body counting services, which measures radioactivity in the human body. The center also maintains the Navy's exposure registry, which has 3.9 million radiation exposures from 350 commands

worldwide dating back to 1946, according to Jones. The center also monitors exposure trends, she said.

"The Naval Dosimetry Center was located just across the street...for more than 32 years," said Cmdr. Thad Sharp, officer-in-

charge, Naval Dosimetry Center. "Today marks a milestone. Today, with the opening of our new high-quality temporary fix facility, our world class personnel along with the new equipment will continue to provide



PHOTOS BY MC2 HANK GETTYS

Defense Health Agency Director Vice Adm. Raquel Bono speaks to a crowd assembled for the Naval Dosimetry Center's ribbon cutting ceremony Feb. 16. The center finished moving to this location in January in anticipation of Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's upcoming remodel.

our Navy medicine, Marine Corps, industrial radiography, nuclear weapons and nuclear propulsion customers around the world, better products and services that they have come to expect from the Naval Dosimetry Center."

Defense Health Agency Director Vice Adm. Raquel

Bono recognized the move as a significant step in improving the capability of a team that provides a critical service. The remodel of the hospital is part of that forward progress, she observed.

"I'm excited that you are here now in this building, having visited your other place back on the fourth floor," she said. "And the fact that you at the time were turning out the level and the quality of work you did at that time was no surprise. It's just that now you deserve to have something that's just a little more state-of-the-art and a little more livable. I'm so glad that we're able to embark on this and get you into this new facility."

The center is the first clinic to move as part of the remodel, and will soon get new neighbors. Over the next year, more clinics and labs from WRNMMC will move into new temporary buildings scheduled to be built nearby.

Other attendees at the ceremony included Deputy Surgeon General of the Navy Rear Adm. Terry Moulton, Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center Commanding Officer Capt. Todd Wagner, NSAB Commanding Officer Capt. Marvin L. Jones, and John Hallworth, Naval Reactors.

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PHOTO BY SHARON HOLLAND

More than 330 uniformed professionals received their medical, graduate nursing, dental and biomedical science, public health and clinical psychology degrees on May 20, during the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences 38th commencement at the Daughters of the American Revolution Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C.

More than 330 Graduate During USU's 38th Commencement

By Sarah Marshall
USU External Affairs

Editor's Note: The story originally ran May 25.

During a ceremony steeped in tradition, more than 330 uniformed professionals received their long-deserved medical, graduate nursing, dental and biomedical science, public health and clinical psychology degrees on May 20 – Armed Forces Day – at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) 38th commencement exercise at the Daughters of the American Revolution Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C.

Graduates in uniform were active duty officers in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force or Public Health Service, and after walking across the stage in their academic regalia, they received their diplomas and left the stage, before changing back into their military uniforms – making for a unique ceremony. Graduating medical students returned to recite their respective service commissioning oath, led individually by each Surgeon General. They were then promoted to their next rank.

Commencement speaker Dr. Ronald R. Blanck, chair of USU's Board of Regents and former Army Surgeon General, explained that USU is unique – not because of its great education, research, or patient care delivered by faculty and students, but because of the synergy between two professions – health care and the military, he said. They share the same values of integrity, courage, commitment and leadership, he said, and especially, service.

“Service is at the core of health care, and at the core of the military – others before self,” Blanck said, speaking from 32 years of experience in the military.

He told the graduates, including public health service and civilian graduates, that health care, the military, and family, are all equally important.

“You’ve chosen fields of service, in health care and in the military – service to your professions, service to your patients, service to those you lead, service to your colleagues,” Blanck said. And it’s important to find a balance between those competing demands – being aware of those demands is the first step in

achieving that balance, he said.


He went on to impart several words of advice.

“Always listen ... be decisive, but never thoughtlessly. Be visible ... people will behave the way you do, so set that example. Remember that if you avoid a decision, you’re actually making a decision not to act, so decisiveness is part of that,” he said. Health care today is much more of a team sport, he added, so value what team members bring to the table.

“Refer, discuss, communicate ... and always keep that patient in the center of what you’re doing with your teammates.” He concluded, “At the end of the day, realize we’re very fortunate — we all are — in

taking care of the best patients in the world. The men and women of the uniformed services, active, guard, reserve, retirees, and their families. What a privilege it is.”

Among the graduates were 159 Doctor of Medicine degrees, 34 master’s degrees, 15 Doctor of Philosophy degrees, and two Doctor of Public Health degrees, from USU’s F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine. USU’s Daniel K. Inouye Graduate School of Nursing conferred 55 Doctor of Nursing Practice degrees and three Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing Science degrees, and USU’s Postgraduate Dental College conferred 69 Master of Science in Oral Biology degrees.




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Corneal Crosslinking Procedure Performed at WRNMMC for First Time

By AJ Simmons
WRNMMC Command Communications

Editor's Note: The story originally ran June 29.

The Department of Refractive Surgery at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center performed its first corneal crosslinking procedure on May 19, making it one of just three military treatment facilities to offer the procedure to service members and their families.

"The procedure is basically hardening and strengthening weakened corneas," said Army Maj. (Dr.) Paul Houghtaling, an ophthalmologist at WRNMMC who performs the procedure. "We're using a combination of [ultraviolet light treatments] and riboflavin eye drops to form crosslinks—or more chemical bonds—between the corneal lamellae."

Houghtaling explained that the procedure is intended for patients diagnosed with keratoconus or post refractive ectasia—two conditions characterized by the weakening and thinning of the clear outer layer of the eye called the cornea.

Keratoconus, often referred to as KC, can cause decreased visual acuity and may even require a corneal transplant in some severe cases, according to Houghtaling. Post refractive ectasia, while very similar to keratoconus in symptoms, is seen in a small percentage of patients following a refractive eye surgery such as Lasik or Photorefractive Keratectomy (PRK).

Houghtaling explained that corneal crosslinking can halt the thinning of the corneas that is caused by



PHOTO BY A.J. SIMMONS

Air Force Maj. (Dr.) Paul Houghtaling (left) works closely with Director of the Laser Vision Center Dr. Joseph Pasternak to perform the corneal crosslinking procedure at Walter Reed Bethesda.

keratoconus or post refractive ectasia by prompting the lamellae (the layered tissue of the cornea) to harden. This hardening, which typically occurs naturally in the corneas as humans enter their 40s or 50s, acts as a reinforcing agent similar in function to a bridge's structural supports.

The goal of the corneal crosslinking procedure is to stabilize the eye and prevent the corneal deterioration from progressing further, according to Houghtaling. He also elaborated that without crosslinking, some patients might require specialized contact lenses or even a corneal transplant.

Corneal crosslinking, which has been performed in Europe since the early 2000s, received its FDA

approval in the United States for treating progressive keratoconus and post refractive ectasia in April and July of 2016, respectively.

Houghtaling emphasized that the procedure stops the thinning and weakening of the corneas, but it does not reverse or cure the damage that has already been caused. Despite this, Houghtaling has high hopes for the future of corneal crosslinking. "...in the future, the goal would be to do a treatment where we can essentially reverse the damage or to fix the shape of the cornea and then harden it and strengthen it as it is," he said.

Houghtaling added that earlier detection and a greater understanding of the causes of keratoconus are important steps to be taken in the future of its treatment.

In the immediate future, Houghtaling hopes to establish a referral process that would allow patients' local eye doctors to determine if they require and are a candidate for corneal crosslinking. He explained that patients who are referred to his department would be assessed on several criteria to determine if they are a candidate. He pointed out that being diagnosed with keratoconus does not necessarily mean that corneal crosslinking is required.

To learn more about corneal crosslinking, keratoconus and post refractive ectasia, visit the WRNMMC Department of Ophthalmology's webpage at <http://www.wrnmmc.capmed.mil/Health%20Services/Surgery/Surgery/Ophthalmology/SitePages/Home.aspx> or the National Keratoconus Foundation's site at www.NKCF.org.

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NSAB Celebrates Earth Day with Base Cleanup and Fair

By Andrew Damstedt
The Journal

Editor's Note: The story originally ran April 27.

Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) celebrated Earth Week with a base-wide cleanup and an information fair showcasing NASA research and the importance of recycling.

"[It's] so people become aware about the environment around them," said Alexia Martinez, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Washington environmental scientist. "[These] types of activities bring people together and they see the base more as not just as where you work ... but as its own community."

Twenty-five people gathered to collect trash around the 245-acre campus April 20, where they collected 212 pounds of trash, picking up items such as PVC pipes, safety glasses and other litter.

"I just wanted to help out, I hadn't volunteered in a while and I thought this was a good case," said Hospitalman Ariel Janifer.

NSAB Commanding Officer Capt. Marvin L. Jones said people should remember to take care of the Earth not just one day of the year, but every day.

"If you see something that could be picked up, it's easy to walk around past it,"



PHOTO BY MC3 WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Sailors and civilians came together to celebrate Earth Day by picking up trash aboard Naval Support Activity Bethesda April 21. Earth Day is an annual celebration to demonstrate support for environmental protection.

Jones said. "It takes much more thought, focus and conviction to stop and pick up that trash."

Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Oprah Nin said she participated because she wanted a clean workplace.

"It's already pretty clean, but we can always do something extra to help out the environment in some type of way," Nin said.

Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Heather

Hoban liked how the activity brought people together.

"This is our home, our environment," she said. "It's nice to be able to keep it clean."

On April 19, those who stopped by the Warrior Café were greeted by a giant globe of the Earth onto which NASA scientists projected planetary data the organization has been collecting from space for the past 40 years.

Some of the data included was changes

in ocean chemistry, such as water temperature differences, groundwater depletion, space weather and the path of an upcoming solar eclipse visible in North America Aug. 21, 2017.

"[Space Weather division] provides daily weather forecasts to the military, to the aviation community, pipeline community, because the currents that are produced by these storms on the surface of the sun create very high levels of charged ion particles that hit the poles of the earth and create these ground currents," explained NASA Goddard Space Flight Center Engineer Maurice Henderson. "We're always concerned about knowing when that happens."

He said the "Science on the Sphere" exhibit travels the world to connect people with the Earth and the solar system.

"We want to make people sense that we live on this little blue marble that's precious and we have to protect it," he said.

Wendy Qassis with Montgomery County Environmental Protection handed out information about recycling as well as coffee tumblers and other items made from recycled materials to remind people of the county's goal to recycle 70 percent of its solid waste by 2020.

"We want to make sure people know how to recycle and why it's important to recycle," she said.



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